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A Discourse OF PROFITING BY SERMONS,

AND

Of going to HEAR, where men think they can PROFIT most.

LONDON,

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A Diſcourſe

Of PROFITING by

SERMONS.

AS there is nothing that all good men more deſire, nothing that they more heartily ſeek and endeavour, than a happy re-union of all thoſe with us, who have rent themſelves from us (which we ſhould reckon to be one of the higheſt bleſſings that God can now beſtow upon us) ſo there is little hope of ſeeing thoſe deſires and endeavours ſatisfied, while the ſmalleſt Scruples ſeem a ſufficient cauſe to hinder many People from joyning with us.

But among all the Reaſons that I have heard alledged for leaving our Churches, this ſeems to me to be the weakeſt and moſt ungrounded, That our Miniſters are unedifying Preachers; for they cannot profit by their Sermons. Which, I am informed, is ſo commonly objected, and ſome lay ſuch weight upon it, and it carries with it ſuch a ſhew of Piety (it being a very commendable thing to deſire to be the better for every Sermon one hears) that it is thought to be worth ſome body's pains, to try to remove this unjuſt Prejudice which too many have entertained againſt the moſt inſtructive and uſeful Sermons, that, perhaps, are preached any where in the Chriſtian World.

This may ſeem too high a commendation; but it is the judgment of more indifferent perſons then we are, on either ſide: of ſtrangers I mean, who have ſeen the World; and having learnt our language and heard and read the Sermons that are commonly preached and printed in this great City, affirm there are not the like to be found in any Church whatſoever. God grant we be not deprived of ſuch ſingular helps by our contempt of them; and that our Candleſtick be not removed out of its place, becauſe we withdraw our ſelves from the light which it holds forth to us.

Of which we are in very great danger, if not knowing what it is truly to profit by Sermons, we make no progreſs at all in the ſtate of Chriſtianity: but deceive our own Souls in a vain opinion of our acquaintance with God, and our bleſſed Saviour, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel, which have little or no effect upon our hearts and lives.

I do not pronounce this to be the caſe of thoſe who object to us, that we have an unprofitable Miniſtry: but I doubt not to demonſtrate, that the Sermons which are generally preached by the Miniſtry in this City (to whoſe Inhabitants I principally write) are ſuch that they may profit by them, if it be not their own fault: and then leave them to judge of themſelves as they ſee cauſe.

I ſuppoſe we are all agreed, or may eaſily agree, what it is to profit by Sermons: for we agree that the Holy Scriptures contain all things neceſſary to our Salvation; and therefore when they are rightly opened, and duely applied in a Sermon, ſo that the Hearers improve either in Chriſtian *knowledge*, or in *Faith*, or in *well-doing*, then they profit by that Sermon. Now if any man do not improve in theſe, by the help of the Sermons, which he may hear in our Churches, and the fault lye in the Ser-

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mon; it muſt be either in the *matter* of it, or in the *manner*: for none, I preſume, will be ſo bold as to affirm, that Gods Spirit doth not accompany a Sermon, which wants nothing belonging to either of theſe, the Preacher alſo being duely qualified. And, thanks be to God, there are none that dare now complain of an *Idle*, *Scandalous*, *Inſufficient* Miniſtry about this City: but inſtead of that, they, that were wont to have thoſe words in their mouths, have taken up the complaint of an *Unedifying*. Whereby we have gained this great Point, That they have no colour to pretend the Perſon who preaches is unſanctified, and therefore God doth not bleſs his Miniſtry: but the fault muſt lye (if there be any) in the Sermon it ſelf; and that in the *matter* of which it conſiſts, or in the *manner* of its delivery.

I.

And as for the former of theſe, I can ſcarce think that any Diſſenter, when he ſeriouſly conſiders, will except againſt our Sermons upon that account; they being taken out of the Holy Scriptures (which are the foundation of our Religion) and with ſuch care to find out their true ſenſe and proper meaning, that perhaps they were never more clearly opened, and rightly applied, than they are now a dayes in our Churches. I am ſure, All that heavenly Truth which was delivered to our firſt Parents when they were about to be expelled out of Paradiſe; which God repeated in his Promiſes to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; which he ſhadowed and confirmed in the Law of *Moſes*; illuſtrated by the Oracles of the Prophets; and finally fulfilled in the Incarnation, Birth, Life, Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcention of the Son of God; and diffuſed by the Preaching of the Apoſtles and the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, all over the World; is there ſo fully and diſtinctly taught, that we may ſafely ſay, the whole Coun-

ſel of Gods Will is at one time or other faithfully declared among us.

And as that is declared compleatly; ſo little elſe is medled withall: matters of controverſie being as rarely handled in our Pulpits, I believe, as in any place of the World: unleſs it be thoſe which the preſent State of things, ſometimes makes abſolutely Neceſſary, to fortifie the People againſt Popery, and againſt Separation: yet even theſe are not ſo often treated of, as matters of general concernment to all Parties of Chriſtians whatſoever. For the great drift of our Preachers ſeems to be, to inſtruct the People in the Truth, and to make them good (particularly to give them right notions of God, which are the very bottom of all Religion) knowing that Errors and Superſtitions will fall of themſelves, without a particular confutation. For they are ſupported by nothing but ignorance and naughty affections; which will uphold them againſt all the Arguments whereby they can be aſſaulted; unleſs mens minds be informed and poſſeſſed with ſuch a right Sence of things, as alters their Wills and Affections, and turns them to an unfeigned love of God and Goodneſs.

Which ſeems to me to be the aim and ſcope of the Sermons which are generally preached by our Miniſters: and which is ſo well performed, that we need not fear to affirm, there is nothing neceſſary either to make men truly knowing in the things of God; or to work belief in them; or to confirm them in the Faith; or to direct them in their practice of what they know and believe; or to excite them to follow thoſe directions, and to live according to the Laws of the Goſpel; or to ſatisfie material Scruples; to reſolve doubts and caſes of Conſcience; to comfort diſconſolate penitents, and awaken drowſie ſinners, or any thing of like Nature: but may be met with-

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all in our Churches, ſo fully, ſolidly, and judiciouſly handled, that men need go no whether elſe for Edification; if that be the thing they truly deſire, and ſincerely ſeek and indeavour.

For what truth can they learn any where elſe, which is not to be learnt, if they will attend upon Gods ſervice there, in our Churches? what Motives to believe, or what Arguments to convince men of their Duty, which are not there repreſented, and preſſed? What Vice is there, which doth not there receive juſt Correction? What Virtue that is not there moſt ſtrongly recommended? which of the promiſes are not there applied to the Hearts of the faithful? and where can men have better means of knowing the terror of the Lord, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks againſt all the impenitent and diſobedient? And if men cannot profit where ſuch things as theſe are conſtantly managed, to as much advantage, as the skill of the Preacher will inable him, I am ſure the fault muſt lie ſomewhere elſe, than in the matter of the Sermons.

II.

Yes, will ſome ſay, we allow the *matter* of them to be good enough: but the *manner* of them is ſuch, that we cannot reap the like benefit by them, that we do by other mens preaching, who cannot conform to the Church of *England*. Which if it be a juſt Exception, the fault muſt lie either in the *compoſition* of them; or in their *delivery* after they are compoſed.

1. Now if the *compoſition* of them be faulty, it is becauſe their *Method* is not clear and perſpicuous; or the *Language* not plain enough to convey the Senſe of them to the mind of the Hearers. Neither of which, I am confident can be truly charged upon them. For never did men more indeavour orderly diſcourſe, and aim at plain, unaffected Speech,

Speech, than they do now in the Church of *England*: where good Senſe, in the moſt eaſie and familiar Words, is now lookt upon as the principal Commendation of Sermons.

Some indeed, I have heard, find fault with our Sermons for not keeping the old method (as they call it) of *Doctrine*, *Reaſon*, and *Uſe*: which is altogether unjuſt as well as frivolous. For there is no man that balks that Method when it is natural; but rather chuſes it, becauſe it hath been common, and is eaſie and uſeful. As for example, if any man among us, were to preach upon this text, *Corinth.* XIII. 13. *And now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity; theſe three: but the greateſt of theſe is Charity*; He would, without doubt not only obſerve among other *Doctrines*, the *preheminence of Charity*: but alſo give the beſt Reaſons, he could think of, why it ought to be higheſt in our Eſteem, and our Affections too; becauſe it is the very end of Faith and Hope; and becauſe it makes us like unto God, which Faith and hope do not. And after ſuch like things, he would likewiſe make that Uſe of this Doctrine, which the Apoſtle himſelf doth immediately in the very next words (Verſe 1. Chapter XIV.) preſſing every one to *follow after* the Love of God and of their Neighbour: to follow it earneſtly and vigorouſly, and never ceaſe their purſuit till they feel their Hearts poſſeſſed with it: not contenting themſelves merely with believing, but being ſo affected with it, that they attain the end of their Faith, which ought to *Work by love*. Nay, he would wiſh them to examine and prove their Faith by this, whether it be likely to ſave them or no. For if it leave them ſhort of this Charity, it will leave them ſhort of Heaven: for it is Charity alone that hath any place there. And who would forbear moſt pathetical intreaties here, to be very ſerious in this ſearch: there being

being ſo much Pretence to *Faith* in the World, and ſo little *Charity* to be found there. To one ſort of Faith eſpecially, which is the apprehenſion of Chriſts Merits, and application of them to themſelves, which every Body makes bold withal, whilſt very few have any thing of that Charity which St. *Paul* deſcribes in the Chapter before named, of *that long ſuffering and kind Charity; which envieth not, which vaunteth not it ſelf,* (or is not raſh) *is not puffed up, doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil;* (but takes things in the beſt Senſe, and puts the faireſt Conſtruction upon them) in one Word, makes a Man inoffenſive not only towards God but towards Men of all ſorts, high and low, rich and poor; that is, to the whole Church of God.

The like I might ſay of all other Subjects of the ſame nature, which lead him that handles them into this Method. But ſometime the matter to be treated of is ſuch, that there is no other Reaſon to be given of it but only the divine Revelation, upon whoſe Teſtimony we receive it; as we do, that *Jeſus Chriſt is the Eternal Son of God, begotten of his Father before all Worlds.* The *Uſes* of which I never heard any Preacher amongſt us fail to make, both for the begetting Reverence towards him, Faith in him, and Obedience unto him.

But what need is there of ſo many Words about this method of Sermons, when the ancient Doctors of Religion, it is manifeſt, did not mind it, nor any other? But ſpake to the Buſineſs before them, without obſerving any conſtant Rule at all in their Diſcourſes: and then it is apparent People profited by Sermons much more than they do now, when they are moſt artificially contrived. And it would be an inexcuſable Sin in thoſe that ſhould leave our Church, did the Miniſters of it only open the Senſe

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of the *Epiſtle* or the *Goſpel* for the day (or any other portion of Holy Scripture, as St. *Chryſoſtom* was wont to do) without making particular Obſervations, or concluding all with diſtinct Uſes (as the manner now is) but only with a general Application, preſſing what they thought moſt material, or what the neceſſities of their People moſt required.

By which way of preaching if Men can receive no profit, they muſt lay the Blame ſomewhere elſe than upon the *Compoſition* of the Sermon, or the *manner of its Delivery* either, which is the next thing to be conſidered.

2. Now here two things are found fault withal: *firſt*, That our Preachers are not *vehement* enough in the Delivery of their Sermons; *ſecondly*, That they *read* them.

For the former of theſe, it is not true: where the matter in hand is of great concernment, and requires more than ordinary earneſtneſs. which ought in reaſon, to be reſerved for ſome certain Occaſions, and not be ſpent upon all things alike: for then it loſes its effect at that time, when it would be moſt ſeaſonably and uſefully employed.

But there is a great miſtake in that which men call *vehemence*: which ofttimes conſiſts only in the ſtrength of the voice: which neither all your Preachers, nor all ours are indowed withall. And if they were, would be but noiſe; without good Senſe: which will move attentive minds, as much as a loud ſound affects mens Ears.

Add to this, that there is a natural heat alſo in ſome mens tempers, which makes them ſpeak vehemently; with ſuch a warmth as hath the appearance of much Zeal: when they are nothing near ſo deeply affected with what they ſay, as ſome men of more ſedate and cool tempers are, whoſe Judgment operates more ſtrongly than their Paſſions. And theſe men ſurely may be very ſerviceable for Illumination of the Mind; with ſuch force of Argument as will

will certainly move the affections vehemently by the help of ſerious Conſideration: without which if any affections be raiſed, they are little worth; and will not laſt, but vaniſh as ſoon as that blaſt is over which ſtirred them up.

And this difference of temper is obſervable in your men, as well as in ours: and therefore this can be no hindrance to Edification among us, no more than among you.

As for *reading of Sermons*, it is not univerſally uſed: but there are thoſe among us whom God hath bleſſed with ſuch ſtrength of Memory or readineſs of Conception, that they need not the help of any Notes at all in the Pulpit. And others do not tye themſelves to them, ſo as never to look off the Book; but only aſſiſt their Memory by them ſometimes. Whereby the Auditory is aſſured that they hear nothing but what hath been beforehand conſidered and digeſted: and the Preacher himſelf alſo is ſecured that he ſhall not forget any thing of Moment which he hath prepared; and that no Expreſſion ſlip from him on a ſudden which may prove indecent or imprudent. As for thoſe whoſe weakneſs of Memory, or their great Modeſty and Fear of being out (as we ſpeak) compells them to keep their Eye conſtantly upon their Notes; as they and others have the forenamed advantages by it, ſo no man can be in the leaſt prejudiced by it, who will but turn his Eyes another way and not look upon the Preacher. Then the Sermon will ſound as well as if it were all pronounced without Book: or if this make it unprofitable, by the ſame reaſon the Holy Scriptures become unprofitable, when they are read out of the Bible; and they alſo muſt be got without Book, to make them edifying. Nay, this exception will lye alſo againſt ſome of your own Preachers of great note, who read every word. I am ſure they did ſo heretofore, and this was then thought no hindrance to your profiting by

them: or if it were, you heard them when you could not profit by them, ſo as you could by thoſe that did not read. And ſo you may do now by our Preachers of this kind, nay ſo you ought to do: when you have nothing to ſay againſt them, but what they are equally chargeable withal whom you highly commend.

III.

But after all, I have ſome reaſon to fear that when men complain they cannot profit by our Sermons, they mean nothing by profiting, but that their affections are not moved in the hearing of them, ſo as they are by the Sermons of Nonconformiſts. Unto which I have many things to ſay if this Paper would contain them: but it will be ſufficient to touch only upon theſe three.

1. That men have ſeveral Talents, both among you and among us: which are all very profitable. Some for informing the Judgment; others for moving the Affections; and others (which is moſt deſirable) for both: you are not able to ſay that all yours move you ſo as ſome do: and yet you make ſuch account of all, that it hath ever been lookt upon as a very diſorderly thing among your ſelves (and worſe than that I ſhall prove by and by) for People to run from their own Miniſter to hear ſome other (though of the ſame way) merely to have the affections more moved. Becauſe,

2. This alone is ſo far from profiting by Sermons, that it is very great unprofitableneſs, to be moved by a Sermon, and do nothing thereupon, but only commend it. That is, to be tickled and pleaſed a while, but not altered nor changed a whit: or to be warmed perhaps a little for the preſent, and then left as cold as a ſtone, without any ſpiritual life, or indeavour to be the better.

3. But

3. But the great thing of all is this, that affections raiſed merely by the earneſtneſs of the Preacher, at preſent in the hearing of a Sermon (and it is well if the affections which ſome People ſpeak of, be not motions which they feel merely from the tone of the voice, as from a taking phraſe, a ſimilitude or ſome ſuch trifle) are nothing comparable to thoſe, which we raiſe by Gods bleſſing upon our own ſerious conſideration, when we reflect upon what we have heard, which ſort of moſt excellent affections, the Sermons that are preached in our Churches, cannot fail to produce, if you pleaſe but to attend to the matter of them and preſs them upon your Hearts: Nay, your Judgments being well informed, it would not be hard for you (if you would but take a little pains with your ſelves) to excite ſuch affections unto that which you know to be your Duty, as would abide and remain; when the others that were excited in the hearing of a Sermon, are gone, and quite vaniſhed, and can never be recalled, but by your own ſerious Meditation upon thoſe Divine Truths, which entred into your Mind, and would have touched, nay peirced your Hearts, if you would have brought them thither, and held them cloſe to your Conſciences.

Which ought to be every Chriſtians care more than I doubt it is, in order to their profiting by Sermons; and that they *may not be barren and unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

IV.

And now it is time for all thoſe who are concerned in what hath been ſaid, to apply it to the preſent caſe, and going down into themſelves to enquire where the fault muſt neceſſarily lye, if the Sermons preached by our Miniſters have proved unprofitable to them; which ſuppo-

ſeth, that they who object this againſt coming to Church, have come heretofore, at leaſt to the Sermon; but went away, and came no more, becauſe they reaped no benefit thereby. Elſe, how can they pretend that our Sermons are unprofitable if they never heard them? Now I have demonſtrated, that the blame cannot be juſtly caſt upon the Sermons, which in themſelves are every way fitted to do Men good: and therefore we muſt ſeek for the cauſe of this Unprofitableneſs ſomewhere elſe; and where are we ſo likely to find it as in thoſe that heard the Sermons? Whom I beſeech, in the Fear of God, by whoſe Word we muſt one day be all judged, to conſider with themſelves impartially, and to ask their Conſciences ſuch *Queſtions* as theſe.

1 *Queſt.* Had you not ſome Prejudice in your Mind againſt the Perſon of the Miniſter whom you came to hear, either upon the ſcore of his Conformity, or of his ſtrictneſs in it, or ſome other account? If you had, and carried it along with you, there is great Reaſon to think this made his Pains unprofitable to you; becauſe you could not hear him with that indifference which you would have heard another man withal. But looking upon him perhaps as a *Time-ſerver*, (as the Language of ſome hath been) a *Formaliſt*, or one who you preſumed before-hand had little or nothing of the *Spirit* in him, you minded not ſo much what was ſaid, as who ſaid it; and diſliked thoſe things which out of another Mouth you would have accepted. For if ſuch Prejudices as theſe be not laid aſide, they bar the Heart ſo ſtrongly againſt the moſt excellent Inſtructions, that though an Angel from Heaven ſhould deliver to us the moſt important Truths, yet, we taking him for a Miniſter of *Satan*, it would ſtop our Ears againſt him, and make his Meſſage ineffectual.

2 *Queſt.* Or might not this be the reaſon of your reaping

ing no benefit, that you came to Church but once or twice, and concluded too haſtily there was no Good to be got there; being willing alſo perhaps, to have this excuſe for abſenting your ſelf wholly from it: whereas if you had conſtantly attended our Miniſtry, you might have found your ſelves ſo much improved thereby, as never to have thought of leaving the Church upon this account, that you could not profit in it. Make a Tryal now (for it is not too late, I hope, if you can ſhake off all Prejudices) and for ſome time continue diligent Auditors of the Miniſter of your Pariſh; and that which at firſt may ſeem to you dull, or hard, or obſcure, will, after you are uſed to it, be clear, eaſie, and awakning: when you are acquainted, that is, with his Method, his Stile, his way of Reaſoning and Diſcourſe, (as well as accuſtomed to his Voice) which you cannot be in an inſtant, or at the firſt hearing. For the Scriptures themſelves are obſcure and difficult, to the beſt of us, in abundance of places, till by Converſation with them, we grow acquainted with their Phraſe, manner of Speaking, Arguing and Connexion. And if God's Word had been generally uſed, as ſome among us have treated his Miniſters (rejecting them, I mean, becauſe they did not preſently apprehend them) it had been thrown out of all mens hands long ago as an unprofitable piece.

3 *Queſt.* I deſire ſuch further, to examine ſeriouſly and recollect themſelves, Whether the thing that made them firſt forſake our Miniſtry, as unprofitable, was not, That when they came to Church the Preacher hapned to treat on ſome Subject croſs to their Opinion? Which haſty Perſons (who conſider not what different Apprehenſions men may have in many matters, and yet agree well enough together) cannot brook; but preſently fling away from thoſe that contradict them, as if they contradicted God himſelf.

Whereas,

Whereas, if they would have had Patience, they might have profited even by ſuch Diſcourſes; either by being convinced of their Error, or more confirmed in that which they took for truth; being able to anſwer the Arguments brought againſt it.

4 *Queſt.* But (that which is worſe than this) the Miniſter was perhaps upon ſome diſtaſtful Subject when you chanced to go to Church, and hapned to treat of ſuch matters as you love not to hear of, though more neceſſary, it may be, than many others, for this very Reaſon, that becauſe of their Ungratefulneſs they are ſeldom handled. Will you not be angry nor lay aſide this Paper and read no further, if I give an Inſtance or two? Which I mentioned for no other Reaſon, but becauſe I know ſome have taken offence (as they call it) at ſuch Doctrines, and ought, if it be poſſible, to be better taught. Was he not preaching, I mean, about *Schiſm*, or *Diſobedience to Governours?* It is certain there are ſuch Sins, which are very heinous and dangerous every way: and therefore, no faithful Servant of Jeſus Chriſt, can, with a good Conſcience, balk the treating of them ſome time or other. And ſuppoſe he that treated of them when you was at Church extended the Duties of *Unity* and of *Obedience* further than you deſire, might not you, for all that, have profited very much by what was ſaid upon thoſe Subjects?

I believe ſober Men among you have heard ſome of your own Miniſters ſpeak harder Words of Conformity and Conformiſts than you would have had them, and yet you did not for that Reaſon leave them, but ſtill fancied you could profit by them; even by what they ſaid on that Subject of Conformity. And therefore you would do well to ſearch and try what account you can give of taking ſuch diſtaſte at the eſtabliſhed Miniſtry, as to forſake it upon their preſſing ſome things, which are moſt certainly Chriſtian

Chriſtian Duties, with greater ſtrictneſs than agreed with your preſent Inclinations.

And I the rather beſeech you to conſider ſuch things as theſe; becauſe it is a common thing to hear Men and Women of your way to complain of their *Unprofitableneſs under Ordinances*, of the *Deadneſs of their Heart in Duty*, and their *Barrenneſs under the moſt powerful means of Grace*: which ariſes perhaps in thoſe Minds that are well inclined merely from a natural Dullneſs or Indiſpoſition, which makes them unable to attend, or to remember, and keep in mind, as they deſire, what they have heard; and therefore moral Indiſpoſitions (ſuch as Prejudice, Paſſion, Diſaffection to the way of Worſhip, or to any Chriſtian Doctrine) will much more make men unapt to receive any Impreſſions from what is ſaid to them; though in it ſelf never ſo good, and fitted powerfully to affect the Heart, were it but entertained with an honeſt Mind.

So that if you complain of Deadneſs and Unprofitableneſs under the Miniſtry of our Church, it is no more than a great many of you do of the like Barrenneſs under your own; but proceeding, it is to be feared, from a worſe Cauſe; of which in Reaſon you ſhould ſuſpect your ſelves to be guilty, rather than conclude ſo ſuddenly as you do, our Miniſtry to be unedifying.

V.

The very ſame may be ſaid to thoſe who fancy, that though they can profit ſomething by our Miniſtry, yet they can profit more by others. They ought in Conſcience to examine whence this Conceit ariſeth; whether it do not proceed from Prejudice, from Diſaffection, from Diſguſt at ſome Doctrine which they love not ſhould be touched, from their ſeldom attendance upon the eſtabliſh'd

Mini-

Miniſtry, from their careleſs hearing when they were there, or from the haſty Sentence they pronounced againſt it before a ſufficient Tryal. And withal, they ſhould conſider what they mean by profiting; whether really and truly they are not more earneſtly preſſed in our Congregations to be thoroughly good and vertuous, to take a ſtrict care to pleaſe God in Thought, Word, and Deed, than they are in thoſe where they imagine they profit more; becauſe they are entertained there, perchance, with more pleaſing Subjects, than this of their whole Chriſtian Duty.

I only ſuggeſt this, as a thing to be moſt deeply pondered, and do not accuſe you to be guilty of ſuch Falſeneſs to your own Souls: but this I muſt ſay, That if you do not grow more holy, harmleſs, and unreproveable in your common Converſation, if your Paſſions be not better governed, if your Tongues be not more ſtrictly bridled, if you grow not more humble, leſs conceited of your ſelves, leſs confident of your own Underſtandings, more fearful to offend God by cenſuring, raſh judging, diſreſpectful Behaviour to your Betters and Superiours, and ſuch like things, you do but deceive your ſelves with an Opinion of profiting more by the Non-conforming Miniſtry than by ours. Upon which if you would attend with a Mind to improve in theſe great things, I am well aſſured your profiting might appear to all men as well as to your ſelves; who might be convinced, in a little time, there is no need to go any whither elſe for ſuch Edification. And if you go for any other, there will be no end of ſeeking ſtill for better entertainment of your Fancies, and itching Ears; which will deſire to be gratified with infinite variety.

The miſchief of which, they of your own way have felt and complained of as much as we; and the better any of them have been, the more careful have they appeared in giving Cautions againſt this wanton humour, though pretending

tending never ſo much to Religion, and to growth in Grace, or Soul-ſaving knowledge. In the days of your Fore-fathers, I am ſure, they who could not in all things conform to the Church of *England*, lookt upon this as a dangerous principle, that *men muſt go where they can profit moſt.* And becauſe it is likely that the Opinion of a grave and ſerious perſon, highly eſteemed by all your Party formerly, may prevail with you more than any of ours, give me leave to mind you what Mr. *Hilderſham* hath reſolved in ſeveral caſes like to ours, particularly about this, of *Mens leaving their own Paſtors to hear others.*

VI.

1. And *firſt*, he reſolves this, That *it is the Ordinance of God every Paſtor ſhould have his own Flock to attend, and every one of Gods People ſhould have a Paſtor of his own to depend upon.* From whence he concludes, that none of thoſe People may ordinarily and uſually leave that Paſtor, becauſe then he doth not depend upon his Miniſtry; which he proves every one of them is bound to do.

2. And that you may not imagine he means any other Paſtor than ſuch as ours, his *ſecond* Reſolution is this, that *they who dwell next together ſhould be of the ſame Congregation:* whence the Name of *Paroichia*, and *Pariſh*, firſt came.

3. Now *thirdly*, if it happen that he who is the ſetled Paſtor of the place where you dwell is a man whoſe Gifts are far inferiour to ſome others; his Reſolution in this caſe is, That (he being a Man *whoſe Gift is approved by Gods Church, and who is conſcionable in his Place, and of an unblameable Life*) *you ought not to leave him at any time, with contempt of his Miniſtry.* And then you contemn his Miniſtry, when you ſpeak, or think thus in your heart, *Alas! he is no Body; a good honeſt Man, but he hath no*

Gifts; *I cannot profit by him.* (Mind I beſeech you theſe Words, which are none of mine, but Mr. *Hilderſham's*, and I doubt too common Language now among you) and mark the Reaſons he gives (which I ſhall contract) why you may not do this. Firſt, *A Man may be a true Miniſter though his Gifts be far inferiour to many others:* and conſequently, ſecondly, *You are bound to love him, and reverence him, and thank God for him:* and thirdly, *Doubtleſs you may profit by him, if the Fault be not in your ſelves.* The beſt Chriſtian that is may profit by the meaneſt of Chriſts Servants. And I am perſwaded, ſaith he, *There is never a Miniſter that is of the moſt excellent Gifts, (if he have a godly Heart) but he can truly ſay he never heard any faithful Miniſter in his Life that was ſo mean, but he could diſcern ſome Gift in him that was wanting in himſelf, and could receive ſome profit by him.*

Which is a thing worthy your conſideration now; for there is none of your Miniſters dare ſay, that they cannot profit by the Sermons that are commonly preached in our Churches; and therefore ſo may you, if you pleaſe to be impartial, how meanly ſoever you may think of any of our Miniſters; eſpecially if you obſerve this *fourth* thing, which the ſame Mr. *Hilderſham* judiciouſly adds, That,

4. *The Fruit and Profit which is to be received from the Miniſtry, depends not only nor chiefly upon the Gifts of the Man that preaches, but upon the Bleſſing that God is pleaſed to give unto his own Ordinance.* To which he applies thoſe Words of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* III. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Who is* Paul? *and who is* Apollos? *but Miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man. I have planted,* Apollo *watred, but God gave the Increaſe. So then, neither is he that planted any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the Increaſe,* &c. And God doth oft give a greater Bleſſing to weaker than to ſtronger means: and therefore

conſider, ſaith he, the Fault may be rather in thy ſelf than in the Preacher, that thou canſt not profit. *And indeed, how ſhouldſt thou profit by his Miniſtry, if thou come with Prejudice, without any Reverence or Delight unto it, and doſt ſcarce acknowledge God's Ordinance in it, nor ever ſeek to God for his Bleſſing upon it*; but look wholly at the Man who preaches?

To conclude this, he obſerves the great want of Judgment that appears in this ſort of Chriſtians, in the choice they make of their Teachers, and the applauſe they give unto them; which ſhews how neceſſary it is they ſhould be confined commonly to their own. For as ſome admire and follow another rather than their own Paſtor, becauſe he can make more oſtentation of Eloquence, Reading, Learning, and ſuch like humane Gifts than their own Paſtor doth, (upon which account the *Corinthians* preferred ſundry Teachers before St. *Paul* himſelf) ſo there are thoſe who leave their own Paſtor and go to others, *only for Varieties ſake.* Though their own have never ſuch excellent Gifts, yet can they not like any one Man long; but having itching Ears, muſt have an heap of Teachers. And ſome alſo prefer others before their own Paſtor, *only becauſe they ſhew more Zeal* (mark this) *in their Voice and Geſture, and Phraſe of Speech, and manner of Delivery; though happily the Doctrine it ſelf be nothing ſo wholſome, or powerful, or fit to edifie their Conſciences, as the Doctrine of their own Paſtor is.* And though theſe be the beſt of the three ſorts now mentioned, and pretend much Love and Zeal, *yet we may wiſh them more Knowledge and Judgment.*

I omit other things upon this Subject, which you may find in his LVIIIth *Lecture* upon the IVth of St. *John.* Where he admits indeed that a man may ſome time go from his own Pariſh Church to hear another whoſe gifts he more

admires: But then (like a judicious Divine) adds this notable obſervation, to correct and regulate this liberty, that it may not prove an evil Humour; viz. *He only makes right uſe of the benefit of hearing ſuch as have more excellent Gifts than his own Paſtor, as learns thereby to like his own Paſtor the better, and to profit more by him.*

Mark it, I moſt earneſtly intreat you, together with his Illuſtration of it, by this Example; *The excellent Gifts God hath beſtowed on others, in this caſe may be fitly reſembled unto Phyſick: which they uſe well, whoſe appetite is thereby amended; and are made able to reliſh and like their ordinary food the better.* If after men have heard one of excellent Gifts, they begin to diſtaſte the Miniſtry of their ordinary Paſtors, and can like of none, profit by none, unleſs they have rare Gifts: they become at length like to thoſe, who by accuſtoming themſelves to drink hot and ſtrong Waters, bring their Stomacks to that paſs, that they can find no Reliſh or Vertue in any Drink or Water, be it never ſo hot or ſtrong. Believe it; they receive no true profit from the moſt admired Preacher, who learn not by hearing him, to profit by any one that delivers to them the wholeſome Words of our Lord *Jeſus*, and the Doctrine that is according unto Godlineſs: though in the plaineſt manner imaginable, both for Method and Language.

This I have choſen to write in his Words, becauſe, there are ſome, I fear, that would ſcarce indure ſuch Doctrine from us: which may, at leaſt, be more reverently received, and duly conſidered (proceeding from a Perſon of ſuch note heretofore among Nonconformiſts) and beget ſo much Sobriety in you all, as to make you think *what manner of Spirit you are now of*? How you come to differ ſo much, from the beſt of your own way in former dayes? This is worth your ſerious ſtudy, that you may not

not offend, as many hearers do, *in a partial and factious eſtimation they have the Miniſters of the Goſpel in.*

They are his Words again, in another place. *Lecture* LXVI. Where he obſerves this partiality ariſes from *two* Grounds. Firſt, the *reſpect they have to difference of Judgement*, that is among us, in ſmaller matters, which makes them affect ſuch only as are of their own Mind in every thing; with the diſlike of all others that are of a contrary perſuaſion. And ſecondly, *from the reſpect they have to the difference of Gifts which is among Preachers* (of which I ſpake before) which moves them to admire ſome, whom they judge to be of excellent gifts (though alas, their judgment is very ſmall) but to deſpiſe and contemn all others. And he hath there theſe *two* remarkable reflections upon this Humor which I beg of you to obſerve and remember.

Firſt, that *this factious Diſpoſition of the Hearers of Gods Word, hath in all ages been the cauſe of much confuſion in the Church of God, and greatly hindred the fruit of the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

Note here. This way which you are in is not the means of profiting in Religion, but of hindring the growth and increaſe of it.

The *ſecond is*, that *whereas they in whom this humor reigneth are wont to glory as if they had more Judgment, and could diſcern better of Gifts than other men* (ſaying, alas! poor People who eſteem ſo highly of ſuch a mans Gifts; If they had any Judgment or underſtanding, they would count him no body) *The Apoſtle tells us, it is quite contrary, and that this argues rather they have very little Judgment or Grace in them: yea this makes them uncapable of profiting by the Word.* 1 *Cor.* III. 1.

O that there were an Heart in you, to ponder ſuch profitable Inſtructions as theſe! which were ſaid on purpoſe to check that evil Diſpoſition which began then to

appear

appear among People inclinable to Non-conformity; and is ſince grown the prevailing humour: inſomuch, that ſome can ſettle no where, but ramble from one Preacher to another, as their uncertain Fancy guides them, without becoming one whit the better for any.

Yes, will ſome ſay; We might be perſwaded to come and hear your Preachers, and hear them conſtantly, but we ought not to be compelled to it; that's a thing you can never juſtifie. To which ſo much hath been anſwered by others, that I ſhall only tell you what that good Man before named ſaith to it, in one of thoſe Lectures which was preached in *Parliament*-time, *May* 8. 1610. where he takes occaſion to ſtir up the People to pray earneſtly for the States of the Realm then aſſembled; that their principal care might be to take order about two things; *firſt*, That an able and conſcionable Miniſtry may be placed every where; and *ſecondly*, that ALL People may be compelled to hear. *For it is certain* (ſaith he upon this ſecond head) *that where there is a good Miniſtry eſtabliſhed, the Magiſtrate may and ought to compell ALL Subjects to come and hear; notwithſtanding all pretence of their Conſciences to the contrary.*

VII.

To ſum up all then that hath been ſaid in this Buſineſs. Be pleaſed to conſider, *What makes a Sermon profitable*; and, *What muſt be done by the People to profit by the Sermon.*

A Sermon is then profitable when it informs the Mind and Judgment aright in Divine Truth; when it inſtructs you in any part of the Chriſtian Duty; when it tends to ſtrengthen or awaken your Faith, that you may more ſtedfaſtly adhere, and earneſtly apply your ſelves to what you know and believe certainly to be Gods Mind and Will;

when

when it works upon the Will and the Affections to ſubmit intirely to Gods Will, that you may bring forth the fruit of a holy Life; when it corrects any of your Errors; ſtirs up your Sloth; incourages you to Diligence, Chearfulneſs, and Perſeverance, and ſuch like things.

But the beſt contrived Sermon in the World for all theſe ends, though it were indited by the Spirit of God it ſelf; would have no efficacy at all in it, if they that heard it, did not attend to it; and attend without Prejudice, without Paſſion, without Partiality, without raſh and haſty Judgment, without Pride and conceit of themſelves, and their own Knowledge and Righteouſneſs: that is, unleſs they conſider and weigh what is delivered, though contrary to their preſent ſence, unleſs they will impartially give every thing that is offered to their mind a due regard; and allot ſome time for its further Conſideration, when it is not to their liking *&c.* For want of which, multitudes did not profit by our Saviours Sermons, but were rather more exaſperated by them: and at laſt finally hardned againſt him, and againſt the Holy Ghoſt, when it came down from Heaven to convince them.

I doubt not they were ready enough then to lay the blame upon his Sermons, which preſſed them to many things, unto which they had no mind; being againſt their Intereſt, or againſt ſome Opinion, or Affection, to which they were deeply ingaged: ſo that they did not profit by them. But for all this, you believe the fault was wholly in themſelves, who ought to have come better prepared; with honeſt and good Hearts to hear his Word. And therefore have reaſon to conſider in your preſent caſe, that ſince the moſt profitable Sermons that ever were made, can do no good, unleſs men be diſpoſed to profit by them: whether the unprofitableneſs you complain of under our Miniſtry, do not ariſe rather for want of what you ought

to

to do to make the moſt excellent Sermon profitable, then from any defect in their Miniſtry.

Judge now I ſay, upon the whole: if you cannot profit by the publick Miniſtry; where is it moſt reaſonable to think the cauſe of this unprofitableneſs lies? whether to ſuſpect the cauſe may lie in your ſelves; or to impute it to their Sermons, and conclude them to be unedifying. Pronounce, I beſeech you, righteous Judgment, after you have well weighed the matter: and give ſuch things as I have here laid before you, a juſt and deliberate Conſideration: ſo as hereafter to reſolve to lay aſide all prejudice, and to be perfectly free to hear with Patience and Candor, what can be ſaid by any body; though againſt your preſent perſuaſion. Let not your Paſſions riſe at it; or if they do, immediately ſuppreſs them, and require them not to meddle in this matter: but to ſubmit unto what ſhall appear to be reaſon, after you have weighed the matter impartially.

If you cannot do this, you ought to think that you have not profited much, by all the Sermons you have heard: and conſequently ſuſpect, you are in a wrong way of growing wiſer and better. And after you have brought your ſelf to ſo much liberty, I doubt not you will find that you are in a wrong way; and therefore reſolve to alter it, and come into the way of the Church. Where if you do not meet preſently with ſuch advantages for your Spiritual growth, as you are told you may receive, you have reaſon to conclude, as the forenamed Mr *Hilderſham* doth to thoſe, that ſaid they could not find ſuch Light, ſuch Power, ſuch Comfort in the Word, as was ſpoken of. *Firſt, either you have not ſought it aright, not with earneſtneſs, or not with a good Heart: or ſecondly, if you have and do not find it at firſt; yet you ſhall hereafter, if you ſeek it here with an honeſt heart.*

VIII.

And the preaching of Gods holy Word among us, would be of greater efficacy upon your Hearts; if when you come to partake of it, you would remember and obſerve ſome Rules (delivered by the ſame Author in another place, Lecture XXVI.) about the publick Worſhip of God: which now, alas, are generally neglected; and therefore had need to be preſſed, for the diſpoſing all mens Hearts to profit by their attendance on it.

1. One is, that *at your coming into the Congregation, and during the whole time of your abode there, you would behave your ſelves reverently.* For we may not come into the place of Gods Worſhip, as we would into a dancing-School, or play-Houſe, laughing or toying *&c.* neither may we go out of it, as we would out of ſuch a one: but in our very coming in, and going out, and whole outward carriage there, we ought to give ſome ſignification of the reverence that we bear to this Place; and that we do indeed account it the Houſe of God.

Which ſerious temper of Mind, and awful ſenſe of Gods Preſence, poſſeſſing the Mind, would, no doubt, be an excellent preparation to receive benefit by the whole Service of God, as well as by the Sermon. For which end,

2. Another Rule is, that *we muſt all come to the beginning of Gods publick worſhip, and tarry till all be done. Yea, it is the Duty of Gods People, ſaith he, to be in Gods Houſe before the beginning: For it becomes them to wait for the Miniſter of God, and not to let him wait for them.* The Reaſons he gives for this are *two.* Firſt, there is Nothing done in our Aſſemblies, but all may receive profit by it. For example, *by the confeſſion of Sins* (and Abſolution, I may add) *and all other Prayers uſed in the Congregation, a man may receive more profit and comfort, than by any other.*

Which is the reaſon why the Apoſtles (even after Chriſts Aſcention, when the typical Honour of the Temple was aboliſhed, *&c.*) were ſo delighted to go to the Temple to pray, at the times of publick Prayer. 1. *Act.* 111. *&c.*

And ſo he goes on to ſhew how by *hearing the Word read* all may profit: and by hearing it *preached*, even by the meaneſt Miniſter of Chriſt, if the fault be not in themſelves. How the *ſinging of Pſalms* alſo furthers the fruit of the Word in the Hearts of Believers: and much more benefit may the faithful receive by *the Sacrament of the Lords Supper.* Nay, by being preſent at the *Adminiſtration* of *Baptiſme*, all may receive profit: being put in mind thereby of the Covenant God made with them in Baptiſm, *&c. Laſtly*, by the *bleſſing pronounced* by Gods Miniſter all may receive good; and therefore none ought to abſent himſelf from any part of the publick Service of God.

For which his *ſecond* Reaſon is very remarkable, that *though we could receive no profit by the Exerciſes uſed in our Aſſemblies, yet we muſt be preſent at them all, to do our homage unto God; and ſhew the reverent reſpect we have to his Ordinances. For there is nothing done in Gods publick Worſhip among us* (obſerve this) *but it is done by the Inſtruction and Ordinance and Commandment of the Lord.* As he ſhews particularly, that it is his ordinance there ſhould *be all ſorts and kinds of Prayers uſed*; yea, this is the chief duty to be performed in our aſſemblies, 1 K. 11. 1. 2. that in our publick aſſemblies *the Word of God ſhould be read* as well as preached: *the Holy Communion* adminiſtred, *&c.* that is, all things ſhould be done as they are now in our *Common-Prayer*, to which it is plain he hath reſpect. And this he repeats again, Lecture XXVIII.

If thou waſt ſure thou couldſt not profit, yet muſt thou come to do thy Homage to God, and to ſhew they reverence to his Ordinance.

3. Another of his general Rules is, that *when we are preſent*

preſent we ought to joyn with the Congregation in all the parts of Gods Worſhip, and do as the Congregation doth. For it makes much for the comelineſs and reverence of Gods Worſhip, that all things be done in good order, without confuſion. And it is a principal part of this good order that ſhould be in the Congregation; when they all come together, and go together, pray together, ſing together, kneel together: in a word, when every part of Gods Worſhip is to be performed by the Congregation, as if the whole Congregation were but one man.

And in ſeveral places he reproves with a great deal of Zeal, mens great careleſsneſs in this; particularly their neglect of kneeling in the Prayers: having obſerved that men who will kneel at their own private prayers *can never be ſeen to kneel at the common and publick Prayer.*

His laſt general Rule is, *that we ought to teach our Children and Servants to ſhew Reverence to the Sanctuary and publick Worſhip of God.* For God cannot indure profaneneſs and contempt of Religion, no not in Children. And it ſtands us all upon to uſe the utmoſt Authority we have to maintain the *Reverence of Gods Sanctuary*: for the open contempt done by any, may bring Gods curſe on us all. *And certainly, ſaith he, among other cauſes of the Plague, and other Judgments of God upon the Land, this is not the leaſt, that Gods publick Worſhip is performed among us with ſo little Reverence and Devotion as it is.*

I am tempted to tranſcribe a great deal more of theſe *Lectures*: becauſe by them you may ſee that if I had moved all that hath been ſaid about our Sermons, I might (according to the Judgment of this devout and learned man) have maintained that there wants not ſufficient means of profiting in our Congregations, if there were none: as long as the word of God is there read, by which (together with the other holy duties) all may receive the greateſt profit and comfort, if they pleaſe. For it is of far

greater exeellence, authority and certainty, than the Sermons of any Preacher in the World. *Firſt*, becauſe it comes more immediately from God: and though it be tranſlated by men, yet is there in it far leſs mixture of humane Ignorance and Infirmity than in Sermons. While the Word is *read* we are ſure we hear God ſpeaking to us, and that it is the truth that we hear, but not alway ſo, when men *preach*: for the beſt man is ſubject to Error. (which by the way ſhews the great ignorance and profaneneſs of this Age; wherein men make nothing of the *reading* of Gods Word, but take the liberty to diſcourſe and chat all the time while the firſt and ſecond Leſſons are read to them.)

And *ſecondly*, the Word that is read, is the Foundation of all Sermons; and the very touch-ſtone whereby they are to be tried. To that which we hear *read* ſimple and abſolute Obedience is due, without any queſtion made of the truth and certainty of it: but ſo it is not to that which we hear *preached*, farther than we find it agreeable to the written Word; for they of *Beræa* were commended for examining by this even that which the Apoſtles themſelves did preach.

IX.

But I ſay no more of this: and ſhall only crave leave, with ſome earneſtneſs, to deſire *two* things of every one who ſaith he cannot profit by our Sermons.

1. The *Firſt* is, that he would examine himſelf ſtrictly upon this Queſtion; whether he thinks he could profit by ſuch a Sermon as this; did he hear it preached by one of your Miniſters? Search to the very bottom of your Hearts, and be not ſatisfied till you feel how they ſtand affected, and how they would receive a diſcourſe upon theſe Subjects; ſhould you come occaſionally (as you now ſpeak) into one of our Churches, and there find the Preacher preſſing theſe things upon the Peoples Conſciences? Eſpecially if you

you heard him add to theſe Rules, that *for the reverence of Gods publick worſhip, care ſhould be taken that the place where the Congregation aſſembleth, may be decent and comely.* And he ſhould call this place, a *Temple*; and affirm that Gods publick worſhip is no where ſo well performed as in this Temple: and that it is a foul ſin and contempt done to Gods worſhip, that Pariſhioners either will not be at the charge to maintain ſuch as may keep the Church decently, or are altogether careleſs to ſee it done: and that the true cauſe why now adays Men will be at no coſt with Gods Houſe, is, becauſe they have no delight in it; and that this is a piece of irreligiouſneſs, which is a juſt cauſe of grief to every godly man, &c. Reflect, I ſay, upon your ſelves, and reſolve, what you really think you would judge of ſuch a Sermon? How would it be accepted by you?

Would be apt to look upon it as altogether unprofitable? or at leaſt, as a needleſs diſcourſe; which might as well, nay better, be ſpared, than preached to the People?

If this be your mind, then conſider with your ſelves, why ſuch things out of one mans mouth ſhould reliſh well enough, or go down without diſguſt; which coming out of anothers you preſently diſlike? Is it not manifeſt that you are partial and diſaffected? and that this is the reaſon you cannot profit by our Sermons? Or if you could not like ſuch diſcourſes, either from Nonconformiſts, or from our Miniſters; then conſider, whether you have not reaſon to think you are very much miſtaken in this buſineſs of *profitable Sermons:* when you imagine ſuch diſcourſes as theſe to be unprofitable and ſuperfluous, which in the judgment of ſober men of all ſides, are not only very uſeful, but ſo neceſſary to be taught the People; that for want of a ſenſe of ſuch things, they are in danger to loſe their Religion? For, as that good man ſaid long ago (and I doubt we are much improved in ſuch impiety ſince that time) *as Superſtition made the Papiſts too careful, and too bountiful:*

ſo

ſo Profaneneſs and Atheiſm hath made us too void of all care, in beautifying the Houſe of God.

2. But if you think that you ſhould count ſuch a Sermon profitable, then I deſire you, *Secondly*, to examine your ſelves and conſider; whether you have learnt ſo much out of the Holy Scriptures, as to obſerve all the foregoing Rules duly and carefully? or ſo much, as to make them your ſtudy, and to think how to bring your Heart into conformity with them? Do you, for inſtance, reverence God's Sanctuary? and when you come into it, and while you are there, give open ſignifications of it? Do you come at the beginning of Divine Service, or only to ſome part of it, at the latter end, or the Sermon only? Do you ſtand up, and do you kneel when the reſt of the Congregation doth? &c.

If you cannot ſay that you are ſo well acquainted with theſe, and the reſt of the foregoing Rules, as to endeavour to live by them; then in reaſon, you ought to conclude, that the fault is ſome where elſe, and not in our Sermons, if you cannot profit by them: For you do not profit by the Holy Scriptures themſelves.

Where theſe things are ſo plainly taught, that a Man ought to think very meanly of himſelf, and to look upon himſelf as a poor proficient in Religion; who is not advanced thus far in his regard to the Duties, and the Solemnities of God's Worſhip and Service.

And, if being admoniſhed of theſe things, he do not humble himſelf; nay, become vile in his own Eyes, for having thus long entertained an high opinion of himſelf, though ſo deficient in the very rudiments and beginnings of Religion; he is not likely to be much the better for any Sermon whatſoever: becauſe he will reliſh none but thoſe only, which feed his vain conceit of himſelf; and of his high attainments, and intimate acquaintance with God, and communion with him in his Ordinances; while

he

he hath not a due eſteem of them, nor makes a right improvement by them.

X.

But I hope theſe ſhort Admonitions may put better inclinations, into thoſe Mens minds; who will ſeriouſly think of them: and particularly beget in them a greater regard, than is uſually given to the Holy Word of God, *read* in our Churches. Which will diſpoſe every one to profit better by all Sermons (which are but the Interpretation and Application of that Word) eſpecially, if, with due devotion of heart, they will joyn in the whole Service foregoing. By which they may profit (I have ſhown) as much, if not more, as by Sermons; if they be religiouſly diſpoſed, and will come at the beginning of the Prayers, and with all humble reverence attend upon every part of God's Worſhip.

For as he that is away from any part of the Sermon (ſays the ſame Perſon again) ſhall profit the leſs by that which he doth hear; ſo he that is away from any part of the Divine Service, gets the leſs good by that at which he is preſent. For there is no part of God's Service (not the *Confeſſion*, not the *Prayers*, not the *Pſalms*, not the *Bleſſing*) but it concerns every one; and every one may receive edification by it; and will loſe much of the Benefit he might have had, if he abſent himſelf from it. A thing in which it ſeems, many of them, who had *moſt knowledge and were the forwardeſt Profeſſors* in thoſe days, did offend: which moved him to ſet out the ſins of thoſe Men in ſeveral Reſpects and Conſiderations. Which it would be too long for me to mention; nor is it needful, if this that I have diſcourſed already be laid to Heart. And if Men will lay nothing cloſe to their Conſciences; all that can be ſaid, or wrote, or preached, will do them no good: but they will be only hearers, or readers, not doers

doers of the Word, deceiving their own Souls.

Wherefore laying aſide (as S. *Peter* ſpeaks, I. II. 1. 2.) *all malice, and all guile* (or deceit) *and hypocriſies, and envies, and all evil ſpeakings, as new born babes, deſire the ſincere milk of the Word* (or that rational ſincere milk; the pure food of your mind and underſtanding, and not of your fancy) *that you may grow thereby.* As certainly you will, when you become of the ſame diſpoſition, with little Children: void of hatred, of guile, of wrath, of diſſimulation, and ſuch like evil affections: and are of an humble, teachable, and ſubmiſſive Spirit. For if every one had but ſuch *an increaſe of grace*, as *to hear meekly Gods Word, and to receive it with pure affection*, they could not eaſily fail, to *bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.*

So we pray in our Litany. And may it pleaſe God, as it there follows; *to bring into the way of truth, all ſuch as have erred, and are deceived:* for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake.

Amen.

F I N I S.